

## Abstract

Major Changes in the technology and economic organization of Indian agriculture have had far-reaching effects on other aspects of social life. A critical but neglected area has been the effect that the changing technology and accompanying social relations of production have had on women's role in agricultural production and on gender relations. Since the publication of Boserup's Woman's Role in Economic Development (1970), there has been a concern with critically assessing the effects of economic development and social change on female status. One of Boserup's main contributions was to begin to delineate the negative effects that colonialism and the penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies has had on women. The major objective of this paper is to undertake a review of what has been learned thus far about class and gender formation and apply it to an analysis of women in India. Preliminary work analyzing statistical trends affecting the lives of Indian women under capitalist development reveals: a declining adverse sex ratio; a declining proportion of women in industrial categories; a drastic decline of women in secondary sectors (industry, trade, and commerce); a decline in the number of female cultivators; and a lower rate of proletarianization (i.e., absorption into the work force) for women than for men and, hence, greater pauperization. This paper concretizes the general view by focusing on research carried out in a single village. It has found that female participation in production activities mirrored caste and class position. Further, this differential participation by the two main castes-cum-classes of rural women directly affects, and is intimately related to, other aspects of their lives. The paper also discusses some of the major contradictions for women's status stemming from the transformation of agrarian relations.

## Caste, Class, and Gender: Women's Role in Agricultural Production in North India

by

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## Women and International Development

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## CASTE, CLASS, AND GENDER: WOMEN'S ROLE IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN NORTH INDIA<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction: The Nature of the Beast

The "great leap forward" in basic grain production--specifically wheat and rice--throughout the Third World is a phenomenon characteristic of only the past two decades. Initially spawned in the boardrooms of the Rockefeller Foundation during the Cold War of the fifties,<sup>2</sup> these agricultural programs were the "Free World's" answer to the menacing Red East which threatened to find fertile ground for its communistic ideology among the starving millions of Asia and Africa. The role of American agribusiness concerns in directing the course of social and economic development in the Third World was blessed by the United States government. The big push to send our experts to develop the underdeveloped occurred in 1965, the year that marked the beginning of a major turnaround in United States aid for the capitalist Third World. There were to be no more free handouts of United States surpluses (otherwise stored in the giant relics of World War II battleships, to be dumped at some future date). "Future deliveries," as Cleaver notes, "were made dependent upon the satisfaction of a number of conditions by the receiving countries--primarily a shift of emphasis from industrialization to agricultural development, the expansion of population control, and an open door to United States investors" (1972:179).

The rapid success of the introduction of new technology, seed, fertilizer, and other inputs, in conjunction with major changes in the economic organization of Third World agriculture, led to an enthusiastic bestowal of the term "Green Revolution." Such enthusiasm, however, has not been unmitigated. Fears (or hopes) were soon expressed that the increasing inequalities and class polarities in the countryside that accompanied this rapid expansion of capitalist relations of production might turn into a "Red Revolution" (e.g., Olson 1963; Frankel 1971; World Bank 1972; H. Sharma 1973). Another major area of concern became the effect that changing technology and the accompanying social relations of production have on women's role in agricultural production and on gender relations.

Boserup's pioneer work on Woman's Role in Economic Development (1970) was the first to draw attention to what has subsequently been a repetitively corroborated fact--i.e., economic development adversely affects an already subordinated female population (e.g., Etienne and Leacock 1980; Remy 1975; Signs 1977, 1981; Rubbo 1975; Mies 1980; U. Sharma 1980; Omvedt 1975, 1978; cf. Stoler 1977). Boserup documented how colonialism and the penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies had the effect of decreasing female participation in production, as well as women's social status; as technological productivity increased. At the same time, Boserup was among the few to note that "subsistence activities usually omitted in the statistics of production and income are largely women's work" (1970:163). Women's work continues to be underreported and underestimated, particularly

in the area of domestic production, despite efforts made to include subsistence work in statistics of production and labor force participation in peasant societies (Beneria and Sen 1981:281). The vast amount of unpaid labor performed by women in the fields of family farms is particularly ignored and unstudied.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, there has been an increased concern in the Third World with the effects on gender relations and women's status of capitalist penetration into rural areas and its accompanying rural class differentiation. India has been largely bypassed in this area of critical research and yet presents an ideal case study in many respects. It has had a long history of colonial rule and capitalist penetration. Social relations of production in the agricultural sector began to be transformed more rapidly by India's early adoption of "Green Revolution" technology.<sup>4</sup> In 1965, the Government of India and the Ford Foundation launched the Intensive Agricultural Development Program which would bring the new technology and high-yielding grain varieties to some of the most favored districts in the country.<sup>5</sup> The introduction of capital-intensive technologies and its effect of increasing class polarization have been the subject of a number of recent studies (Byres 1972, 1981; Frankel 1971, 1978; Breman 1974, 1977; Tharamangalam 1980; M. Sharma 1978). Increasing differentiation of the peasantry among various classes of landholders, tenants, landless laborers, subsistence artisans, those engaged in household industries, peddlers, and urban-living wage earners has also occurred (Mies 1980:3). Both class differentiation and polarization are taking place under the impact of a growing commercialization of agriculture, a rise in productivity and agricultural prices, an increase in cash-cropping, and the introduction of new technology. All of this has strengthened the economic position of richer classes in the countryside. They have benefitted most from government expenditures and rural development projects, and they largely dominate the local credit institutions. An accompanying trend toward the concentration of landholdings and increasing proletarianization and pauperization of those displaced from the "development" process has also been documented (Alexander 1973; Das 1975; Desai 1979). Over and beyond all this is the interplay of the material realities of caste and its ideological dynamics in the process of class formation. To a large extent, caste and class affiliations still overlap in village India. Large landholders who employ hired labor are overwhelmingly from the upper castes, while the agricultural workers themselves come from the ranks of the lowest--predominantly Untouchable--castes. Peasant proprietors using household labor are from the ranks of the middle agricultural castes. Distribution of other resources and access to political control follow the same broad pattern of caste-cum-class distinctions (see further, M. Sharma 1978).

Despite all this research, however, the critical effects of capitalist accumulation on class formation and changes in gender relations in the rural areas have been ignored. This paper is a preliminary attempt to analyze the effects of changing class and gender relations in agriculture by focusing on the lives of women in a specific village in North India. Fieldwork in

Arunpur village,<sup>6</sup> located in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, reveals that female status and participation in production cannot be understood without paying close attention to the ways in which they vary according to caste and class position. The contradictory position of rural women grows out of the nature of the sexual division of labor and their subordinate position at different levels of intersection between class and gender. This contradiction is between the domestic "seclusion" and total dependence of highly-controlled upper caste women from landed households and the active participation in production and greater socio-economic independence of low caste women from landless agricultural households. Between are the women of intermediate castes representing peasant cultivators who work side by side with men on family farms. The wage labor available to rural women is scarcely liberating and the main goal of agricultural workers (male and female alike) is to become affluent enough that women may withdraw from the fields and go into seclusion. Following a section on the framework for the analysis employed here, the remainder of this paper will consider the interrelation of class formation and gender relations in rural North India. A concluding section brings out the major contradictions that affect these women.

### Production and Reproduction in a Peasant Economy

The processes of accumulation involved in the extension of capitalist relations of production in the countryside have had differing effects on women of different classes. Implicit in this idea of "development" is the "uneven" nature of the process--affecting individuals, sectors, regions, and nations at uneven rates. This is unlike the view, maintained by Boserup (1970) for example, that "modernization" is both beneficial and inevitable in the specific form of capitalist development that it has taken in most Third World countries. Contributions to a growing critical literature on the process of capitalist accumulation highlight how women's loss of status results from the interweaving of class relations in production and gender relations in reproduction and from the changes in women's work and in the forms of their subordination. The single most powerful tendency of capital accumulation is

to separate direct producers from the means of production such as land, and to make their conditions of survival more insecure and contingent. This tendency manifests itself in new forms of class stratification in rural areas, e.g., between rich peasants or capitalist farmers on the one hand, and poor peasants and landless laborers on the other. Such a process can have a variety of effects on women's work depending on the specific form that accumulation takes in a particular region (Beneria and Sen 1981:288).

After summarizing a number of specific ways in which the structure of production associated with Third World capitalism affects women's status, Beneria and Sen conclude:

...[capitalism] is not a neutral process of modernization but one that obeys the dictates of capitalist accumulation and profit-making. Contrary to what Boserup implies, the problem for women is not only the lack of participation in this process as equal partners with men; it is a system which generates and intensifies inequalities and makes use of existing gender hierarchies in such a way that women are placed in subordinate positions at the different levels of interaction between class and gender" (1981:290).

If, then, the sphere of production can make use of preexisting gender hierarchies (as well, in fact, as be influenced by them, e.g., Mies 1980:8-9), what is needed is a complementary analysis of those relations that both generate and condition the dynamics of gender systems. The concept of reproduction is used to distinguish gender relations from those of class and extends a Marxist analysis to feminist issues--considering the household and family as the locus. An excellent starting point for any study of the interaction of class and gender is the perceptive observation of Marx that the maintenance and reproduction of the working class is a "necessary condition to the reproduction of capital" (1967:572). Engels also viewed the production of the means of subsistence and the reproduction of human beings as two fundamental human activities.

According to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production (Engels 1977:5-6, my emphasis).

Although they recognized the critical importance of the maintenance and reproduction of the working class--necessary to the reproduction of capital--neither Marx nor Engels extended their analyses to investigate the process within the household. Marx, like the capitalist, thought he "may safely leave its fulfillment to the labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation" (1967:572). Both Marx and Engels mistakenly tied women's oppression to the rise of private property under capitalism. Their emphasis on the relationship between private property and the growth of the family emphasizes the family as a bourgeois institution for the concentration of wealth. This diverts attention from the nature of the working class family (see further, Humphries 1977). They also failed to see that a transformation of productive structures alone would not automatically do away with that oppression as the examples of women in China, Cuba, and the Soviet Union today demonstrate. The moment of oppression of women is not to be located in the development of private property, but in the patriarchal relations preceding capitalism. The

traditional focus placed on the sphere of commodity production and women's role in the class system generated by capitalist production is not--on its own--sufficient to analyze women's work and status in society. It must be complemented by an analysis of how reproduction, as a determinant of roles, the sexual division of domestic labor, patriarchal relations, and stereotypes in the socialization of the sexes, carries over into the productive sphere. The focal point of reproduction is the household and it is the social relations among household members that defines the "woman problem" and determines women's role in development (Beneria and Sen 1981:291).

In precapitalist subsistence economies, most work was done within the family unit. The sexual division of labor usually relegates childcare, food processing, and household maintenance (cleaning, sewing, washing), as well as childbirth, to the sphere of women. The household is the basic unit of production in a peasant economy and develops an internal division of labor based on age as well as gender. It is the physical focus of both production and reproduction tasks (i.e., consumption and childrearing); both of these are interwoven in the household's work and time rhythms (Sen 1980:81-82). Capitalist production brings critical changes to the nature of the household unit. Work is divided into "public, socialized work and work that remained in the family. The more development takes place, the more work that used to be done in the family is brought into wage labor" (Tepperman 1981:8), and the more women are removed from their public role in production. This does not mean, however, that housework has become unimportant economically.

The wage labor system, as Marx and Engels noted, is sustained by this very socially necessary but private (i.e., domestic) labor of housewives, mothers, and daughters in childbearing, rearing, cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, mending, maintenance of property, food preparation, daily health care, etc. This perpetual cycle of labor is necessary to maintain and perpetuate the workforce. In this sense it is an integral part of the economy. The direct consumption of commodities purchased with wages takes place within the household, yet the inputs used for domestic production are not all bought on the market; some, like wood and vegetables, may be gathered by women. These inputs are then transformed into "use-values" (via food processing, cooking, etc.) by women for consumption in the home. Both types of consumption serve to reproduce the commodity labor power (Humphries 1977:42; Beneria and Sen 1981:292).

Yet the basic economic aspect of the family is obscured and it comes to be regarded as "unproductive" (not participating in wage labor). The domestic labor of women thus becomes "unproductive" as well. As the family increasingly becomes isolated from "paid, productive, wage labor," women are cut off from men in a drastic new way that gives new meaning to male supremacy within patriarchy. Domestic labor is devalued through its isolation from the production activities of wage labor (Zaretsky 1976:23ff; Middleton 1981).

Beneria and Sen astutely note, however, that the separation between the tasks involved in production and reproduction is often artificial, as when a woman carries her baby with her while working on the farm. Domestic work is also an integral part of the labor process, as when meals cooked at home are transported to the fields. Further, the agricultural process itself extends into household production when, for example, cereals are dried and agricultural goods processed before being ready for family consumption (Beneria and Sen 1981:292).

The dialectical interrelation of women's roles in reproduction and production is well illustrated by an examination of gender relations in rural India at the interstices of relations between classes. While studies of rural India universally still view the peasant as a male, those on women among the peasantry portray them as a homogenous group. Even when the existence of different classes is acknowledged, scant attention is paid to the ramifications of such differentiation (e.g., U. Sharma 1980; Jacobson 1976-1977; 1977). The remainder of this paper explores how production, reproduction, and the sexual division of labor converge on defining gender as a social category for rural women. Basic information was acquired by fieldwork in a north Indian village and augmented by residence in other villages and readings on the subject. Although at the time my major interest was not the study of women, I ultimately did spend most of my time with females because of the highly sex-segregated society of rural North India. I was struck with the great differences in the status of women from different classes and castes, their relationship to agricultural production, and its concomitant socio-cultural manifestations. It was from this experience that my present interests arose.

### Caste, Class, and Gender in Rural North India

India's female population is one of the largest in the world and over 80% are in the rural sector, engaged mostly in subsistence production. Their participation in the rural economy varies widely depending on the specific form of production (hunting/gathering, slash and burn agriculture, or settled plough agriculture) as well as associated caste and class positions. Preliminary work analyzing general statistical trends affecting the lives of Indian women under capitalist development reveals a disturbing picture.<sup>9</sup> Mies presents information showing that the proportion of women to men has been declining steadily since the beginning of the century. This same period coincides with increasing penetration of capitalist economic and social relations into the countryside, and Mies makes an effective argument for the correlation of the two phenomena. The Punjab and Tamilnadu, both areas of high productivity successes, show very low and steadily declining sex ratios respectively; whereas Kerala, an exceedingly poor Communist state, shows stable, high sex ratio (Table 1). The disproportionate sex ratio is also associated with differential health care and nutrition and a higher infant mortality rate for females (Mies 1980; see also Miller 1980). Hand in hand with the declining sex ratio is the declining proportion of women in all broad industrial categories. This decline is most marked in secondary sectors (trade, industry, and commerce) (Tables 2 and 3). Of the

12% of the total female population recognized as "workers," almost all were in the rural sector by 1971 (see also, Table 4). Thus, while the total percentage of women in the workforce decreased between 1911 and 1971 (from 34% of the workforce to 17%), the proportion of women in the workforce who are engaged in agriculture has increased (from 74% to 80%).<sup>10</sup>

For women in the agricultural sector, the picture is not particularly heartening. Statistics often present contradictory numbers (e.g., Tables 5 and 6), but lead to a uniform conclusion: women are losing control over land as a means of production and being squeezed out of agricultural subsistence activities, i.e., they are gradually becoming pauperized. The data in Table 6 indicate that while the number of female cultivators dropped by 52% between 1961 and 1971, the number of male cultivators increased by 6%. In the same period both men and women were pushed from the status of poor peasants into dependence on wage labor as their major source of income, but the number of male agricultural laborers increased by more than double the rate for women. Female labor, therefore, is not being absorbed into employment and proletarianized as fast as male labor. The number of women listed as non-workers also rose more quickly than the number of men so categorized; they were pushed out of even agricultural work into extremely casual unskilled labor that is not even noted in statistics. Capitalist relations of production have adversely affected large numbers of rural men, but its effects have been even worse for rural women. As a group, rural women are heading toward greater impoverishment with the burden falling heaviest on poor women who are getting poorer.

Statistics alone, however, do not reveal the specific ways in which real individuals are affected. The generalized all-India view of the declining status of women must be concretized by actual case-studies. My own research was conducted in the village of Arunpur, eight miles from the city of Banaras in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. Arunpur is located in the Bhojpuri region, stretching from eastern Uttar Pradesh through western Bihar, where a dialect of Hindi and the presence of certain caste groups and customs are common to all. The region is one of the most densely populated in India and is considered economically and socially backward. Arunpur's population of 1,047 is divided into sixteen castes.<sup>11</sup> The numerically large and dominant landowning caste of Bhumihars represents 27% of the population (see Table 7). The village also has an almost equal number of landless Untouchable Chamars, traditionally leatherworkers, who provide the Bhumihars (and other castes) with cheap agricultural labor. Two other main caste groups are the Brahmans, who represent 4.6% of the population, and the Kurmis. The Kurmis are an intermediate caste of small peasant-proprietors, representing 18.7% of the village inhabitants. They hire little labor and all family members work in the fields.

With the abolition of landlordship (zamindari) in Uttar Pradesh in 1950, those who had been occupancy-tenants, for the most part those who now have land in Arunpur, became "owners" of the land.<sup>12</sup> Kurmis complain that they have not been able to increase their holdings since the abolition of zamindari. When land comes on the market it is "grabbed up by the

Bhumihars. It is they who gained the most" (Table 8). Ironically, Chamars lost the most by the abolition of zamindari. The land that they leased (c. 12.5 acres) is no longer available. It passed into the hands of Kurmis, Bhumihars, and others by fraudulent means. Today practically all Chamars are landless. By losing their land and relinquishing their traditional occupation as removers of dead animals and leatherworkers, they have become totally dependent upon upper caste Bhumihars and Brahmans for whom they work as ploughmen and laborers. All households of the latter two castes have at least one Chamar ploughman, for in Arunpur--as elsewhere in the region--Bhumihars and Brahmans feel it beneath their dignity and prestige to touch the plough.<sup>13</sup> As part of their wage the laborers receive the use of plots of land belonging to their employers. To prevent any legal tangles whereby the tiller may eventually claim the land he works as his own, the plot is often changed each year. This system of rotating the allotted plots is so flexible that it escapes the law, and laborers are reluctant to complain for fear of losing their jobs and the use of land. There is no shortage of labor in Arunpur, and, theoretically, one pair of hands can easily replace another. But such replacement is difficult, if not impossible. The credit that a laborer obtains from the landowner tends to bind them together permanently, and the debts of the father are inherited by his sons. Such debts accumulate at an annual interest rate of 20 to 36 percent so that repayment at the very low "wage" becomes impossible (see M. Sharma 1978:166ff for wages and conditions of labor).

Class formation in Arunpur, indicated by ownership and control of the major means of production in rural India--land (Table 9)--is mirrored in the distribution of other forms of wealth and resources. These include access to cash income, occupational mobility, incidence of debt, ownership of agricultural implements and livestock, irrigation facilities (including wells), size and type of house, and education. Land and other forms of wealth are highly concentrated in the hands of the Bhumihars and the gulf between them and the Untouchables is enormous. The Bhumihars also control the political arena of the village, linking their dependents and people of other castes to themselves by vertical ties of factionalism. Non-Bhumihars are effectively excluded from the exercise of power and control.

The horizontal cleavage among castes that are competing for power and valued resources in the village has many of the characteristics of class conflict but has thus far not become separate from caste status. Bhumihars all unite on any occasion of conflict with their laborers, the landless Chamars. Each of these groups is united by the consciousness of a common economic position in relation to the means of production, as well as by the knowledge that they either enjoy or are denied the authority to exercise power. The existence of a separate "caste culture" or lifestyle for each group further widens the gap between them. Because of the completely dominant position of the Bhumihars, Arunpur is still a closed society. Status, wealth, and power by and large all accrue to this caste. To an overwhelming extent, caste and class overlap and remain congruent with one another for rural India (see Beteille 1965).

Two main factors that cut across caste lines in the village, serve to inhibit the growth of class feelings. First, the traditional sense of the deep status differentiation marking off all castes from the Untouchables still remains. No matter in what situation of misery one may live, to be above the Untouchables is some consolation in itself. This consolation would be lost if castes low on the hierarchy joined hands with the lowest of the low. Such an identification is also inadmissible as long as one believes in the divine ordering of the hierarchy. Second, the closed village society is opening up so that wealth (via education, new jobs, and the availability of some land on the market) and power (through elections) are becoming somewhat more dispersed throughout the population. The people who now have the technical opportunity, if not always the actual chance, to compete with the Bhumihars for these resources are the lower Touchable castes. Because they now see a way to gain for themselves access to valued commodities, these castes have chosen to stand against Chamar aspirations. It is rarely possible for them to prevent the Bhumihars from taking a large share, but it must make no sense to the lower castes to divide things even further by adding the Chamars (Untouchables) to the field of competition. The ability to participate in a monetized economy means, for some castes, a greater chance to separate caste from class or landownership.

At the same time, the unevenness of the extension of capitalist relations into the countryside and the variation in the extent to which individuals (via household membership) participate in the growing market economy, have also served to exacerbate the differentiation and polarization among the peasantry. Only five Bhumihars, all heads of large joint-family households and leading political figures in Arunpur, may be called capitalist "farmers." All have achieved wealth by making agriculture a profitable venture and in some cases by involvement in outside business as well. Although all still employ bullock-drawn ploughs, they use many of the "Green Revolution" inputs and are innovative in accepting new seeds, machines, and other changes that will increase their productive output. They all produce a marketable surplus and their access to cash has enabled them to make further purchases of land, not hesitating to use force or fraud when necessary. They have fully accepted material betterment as one of the ideals (if not the major one) in their lives. Thus, the impact of the "Green Revolution" has had the effect of increasing differentiation within this landowning caste of Bhumihars as well as increasing differentiation among castes.

The class position of peasants has an immediate effect on the size and composition of the household as well as on the nature of women's work. For the most part, the socialization of all female children follows fairly rigid sex stereotypes (see, e.g., Jacobson 1977:25ff), but differences in class (cum caste) status produce differences in gender roles. What follows explores several areas of difference in gender roles experienced by women at the extremes of the class/caste hierarchy: the upper caste Bhumihars and the Untouchable Chamars. The two groups have different relationships to the means of production and use of wage labor, and different sexual divisions of labor. These differences have concomitant effects on the status of women.

The following sections consider: a) the nature of the household; b) marital patterns; c) domestic work; d) participation in agricultural production; e) control over resources; f) control of reproductive activities and fertility; and g) stereotypic ideals of Indian woman.

### Nature of the Household

The maintenance and reproduction of labor power is a process that takes place within the household. Arunpur is typical of the rest of India in that the size and extension (both generational and collateral) of a household is contingent on its wealth; it is the wealthiest families that maintain joint households, and it is their common stake in land that keeps them together. The major advantage is economic; by pooling resources, they can save more money and consolidate manpower for labor and for use as a pressure group. Division of property usually occurs at the point after the father's death when respect for him and his wishes no longer keep the family together. Property divisions require an equal distribution of all wealth among sons, regardless of their number of offspring. The resulting nuclear family households quickly become new joint family households as soon as the sons of the household head marry. The most prevalent household type among the landowning Bhumihars in Arunpur is the joint family. The Bhumihar household average size is 11.1. This number includes those male members who have migrated to the city for employment, almost always leaving their wives and children behind in the village. Household size is an important factor in the political arena where Bhumihars dominate. More often than not, decisions reached are backed up by the implicit or explicit use of force, and that is one more reason for maintaining a large household.

Household dissension arising from the inequality of labor and wage contributions is rife among Bhumihars. Tension and conflict arise specifically out of the clash of individual personalities within the roles they are supposed to enact. Quarrels among women are given as a major reason for the disruption of a joint family. Most often this apparent "personality" clash is really an expression of a woman's resistance to those who have control over her.<sup>14</sup> These people include, first and foremost, her mother-in-law, then her elder sister-in-law, her father-in-law (and his brothers, if living together), her husband, and her husband's elder brothers. Each of them has a legitimate right to control the actions and activities of a daughter-in-law.<sup>15</sup> A Bhumihar woman remains physically in seclusion, confined to household chores, and must observe purdah (veiling) before all males elder to her husband. Newly-wed brides will observe it even before women from outside their house. Although there are all kinds of individual differences, adjustments, and exceptions--and although these restrictions lessen somewhat with age--purdah remains a critical fact of life for these uppercaste women.

Household relations among the Chamars do not have the formality that governs those of uppercaste homes, particularly those of the Bhumihars. Role expectations are much more fluid. Chamars do not practice the custom of touching the feet of their elders as a sign of respect, which other

castes do. Every visit we made to the separate Chamar quarter was accompanied by quite a hullabaloo; the children (boys and girls) were quite unmanageable and no one ever succeeded in getting them to quiet down. Referring to their behavior, Chamars said: "This is the significance of caste; see how low caste children are born low, and so there must be caste." On other occasions, such as talking about the misbehavior of Bhumihars with Chamar women, we were told that Chamars deserve to be Untouchable because they act in such a "low" way.

The average household size among the Chamars is 5 to 8 members. Although their ideal is the joint family, the majority live in nuclear family households or in joint family households of only two generations depth (father and married sons with no children). Because of the difficulties of remaining together under severe economic pressures and with no common property to bind them, the Chamars and other Untouchables partition their households while continuing to live under extremely crowded conditions in the same house. Wage labor fosters the growth and maintenance of nuclear family units among the Chamars, and, with nuclear family units, there are far fewer people who have control over a woman's life. A young Chamar bride may assume the practice of covering her face before elders, but this is discarded after one or two years. Then she can (and must) move freely through the village and fields, doing her own and others' work. A Chamar woman may continue to practice this purdah for a longer time in encounters with higher caste males. It would also appear to be physically difficult, as well as extremely uncomfortable, to keep purdah under conditions of great crowding. In one case, four brothers who are economically independent of one another still share the same small three-room house. It contains a total of thirty-eight people. Because Chamars have neither the land nor the money to build new homes, the situation will grow to impossible proportions by the next generation.

### Marital Patterns

Marriages among Bhumihars are arranged by the household head with an eye to forging critical alliances with other households of their caste. The wishes of the boy and girl are not primary; they rarely ever even see each other before betrothal. Among the wealthy Bhumihars, a marriage is also a symbol of one's worth and status in the community--the more one can give in a daughter's dowry, the more one may demand for a son. Marriage expenses at the time of this study ranged from about 2,000 to 15,000 rupees (1 rp. = U.S. .13). Household items and furniture, a radio, a bicycle, ornaments, and a watch are usually given or received as part of the dowry.<sup>16</sup> Bhumihars also observe the custom of giving tilak (specific previously agreed upon gifts to the groom of money, clothes, jewelry, sweets, and fruit). For a woman is there is no possibility of divorce nor is widow remarriage permitted. I knew of only one case in which remarriage was being considered, that of a young girl widowed before consummation of her marriage.<sup>16</sup> A man, on the other hand, is free to divorce his wife, take a second wife should the first not bear children (regardless of which partner may be the cause), and is usually encouraged to remarry if his wife dies leaving small children.

Chamar marriages are also arranged at an early age but can end in divorce or separation. A common practice among Chamars is for a widow to live with her husband's younger brother. There was even one instance of a woman living with her deceased husband's elder brother. This was an illicit relationship not only because a woman should completely avoid males older than her husband, but because the elder brother already had a wife and children. One of the major sources of debt for Untouchables is the necessity of borrowing cash to pay for expenses incurred for the marriage of one's daughters. The average amount appears to be about 500 rp. This covers the bare minimum of a feast for relatives on both sides and the provision of some combination of pots, a lota,<sup>18</sup> large brass trays, glasses, and a pitcher for the dowery. Rarely is a bicycle or cash (and then only 10 rp. to 100 rp.) given. One man recalled having to sell the pots received at his son's marriage to buy food. The practice of giving or receiving tilak is not observed by Chamars.

#### Domestic Work

Village women of all castes spend hours of the day in an endless round of household chores, rising as early as 5:00 a.m. and retiring as late as 10:00 p.m. None of this, of course, is included in the official statistics, and 88% of Indian women are gratuitously granted the title of "non-workers" (Govt. of India 1974:153). Yet, as Jacobson aptly notes, "it can hardly be imagined what the economic repercussions would be if all of India's female 'non-workers' ceased their endless sifting, churning, cutting, grinding, cleansing, carrying, and serving" (1976-77:224). Major work includes child care, food processing and preparation, and care of the household. Raw food materials must be processed into cooked meals for the household. The most basic tasks of drying, cleaning and grinding grain and spices, boiling and churning milk, and making "bread" daily are extremely time-consuming. Cooking over a single cow dung fire goes on for hours in an unventilated portion of the house. The youngest bride, often with an infant suckling at her breast, spends hours squatting before a fire with temperatures that reach unbelievable heights in the summer. No matter what time men return to eat, women must wait for them and are the last to eat. The youngest daughter-in-law (who has worked the hardest) eats last of all. The earthen oven and kitchen floor must be cleaned and the dishes and pots washed daily and put away. Other tasks of child care and household care are interwoven among food preparation activities. Children must be fed, bathed, and nursed when ill. Water must be drawn and clothes washed, sewn, and mended. Then there is cow dung to be collected and made into fuel cakes or used to clean floors and walls of mud houses.

In the large joint households of the Bhumihars, such tasks may be divided up among a number of women so that the burden, though undoubtedly falling heaviest on the youngest bride, is somewhat lessened all around. At times of sickness or emergency, a woman may always find another pair of (female) hands to take over her chores. Wealthy households may employ the labor of a young girl or some hapless woman to help in food preparation, cleaning the utensils, and drawing water from the well. They also enjoy

small conveniences such as a private well or hand pump, kerosene or coal fire cooker for making tea or snacks, sharp knives, and a large lamp for cooking at night. These, and other such "luxuries" as an extra hand within the home or a hired hand from without, are not available to Chamar women. Because of their involvement in agricultural production and their work as hired laborers, Chamar women truly carry a double burden.<sup>19</sup> This burden is further increased by the lack of adequate food and consequent ill-health.

### Participation in Agricultural Production

Ploughing, involving walking behind a pair of bullocks yoked to a long wooden, steel-tipped plough, is strictly a male activity, but there is no agricultural task considered the sole purview of women.<sup>20</sup> They are involved in sowing, transplanting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting, winnowing, and threshing. In recent years, the introduction of the "Green Revolution" package of inputs, including machinery, has contributed to squeezing women out of the new productive agriculture and relegating them to the more laborious and traditional methods of production. As Boserup notes, this type of agricultural development increases men's productivity at a faster pace than that of women (1970:53ff; see also Jacobson 1976-1977:224ff). The Village Level Worker from the Community Development Office met primarily with the larger Bhumihar farmers who could afford the new seed and fertilizers and who were given government loans for tubewells, etc. Built into the system of agricultural development is an upper-class and male bias that promises to leave women far behind in development schemes.

Bhumihar women, being largely confined to the house, are limited in the agricultural tasks they may perform. One woman, whose household was small and suffered from a lack of available male-power, resorted to getting her water from the neighborhood well only under cover of darkness. The same woman would go to the Chamar quarter after nightfall to negotiate hiring of labor as it was needed. Another Bhumihar woman, who lived with her husband and children, ran the entire farm operation herself. The children were all little or at school; her husband was a teacher in the local Intercollege. She was extremely knowledgeable and efficient in all her work. Thus, it is not that Bhumihar women never perform tasks in production (such as bringing food to the fields, collecting produce from the fields she needs for the day's meal, bringing firewood), but that such activities are rare and are not within the normal expectations. Bhumihar women depend on others (from the house or hired labor) to perform these tasks.<sup>21</sup> Women do, of course, take part in agricultural production through all the domestic chores of food processing mentioned above.

Chamar women move about more freely, and their work as daily wage laborers when work is available puts them in the position of being important providers. Some women may find work during the planting season, as well as taking part in occasional tasks of weeding, transplanting, or irrigating. Others may work on a more regular, parttime basis. For women and men alike, however, the major income is during the two harvest periods, totaling about 30 to 60 days of work. During this time, women, men, and children all work

approximately twelve hours a day (sunrise to sunset) and with about one hour free for lunch. During the hot season harvest time, the noontime break is extended another two to three hours and work is often carried on until 10 or 11 p.m. Women and children receive one and a half to two sers (about 1 kg.) of grain for each day of labor at harvest. Men receive from two to five sers per day for labor on this seasonal basis at the harvest. Other specific types of labor that both women and men also engage in are planting or harvesting potatoes, working with sugar cane, and transplanting padi.<sup>22</sup>

Chamars must still perform forced labor (begar) in addition to the various types of work for which they are paid. At times of marriages or other ceremonies in a Bhumihaar's house, or during the six months of the year when the Bhumihaar does not employ a ploughman, Chamars and their family members may be called upon to work. They must perform begar whether they wish to or not. Usually food, and occasionally some money, is given. Chamar women also still perform their traditional role as mid-wives. Because this is considered polluting and the remuneration given is quite small, they were talking of giving up this service.

Both Chamar men and women say that their ideal is to have their women in purdah. At least when it comes from women, this should be understood as a desire for greater economic prosperity, a sign of which is a family's ability to keep a woman's services in the home, and not as an expression of the women's desire to relinquish their independence. There would appear to be a direct relationship between the very early age of formal marriage for Chamar girls, although they remain in their natal homes somewhat longer than Bhumihaar girls, and their inability to practice purdah. A Chamar told me:

We marry off our daughter so young [eight to ten years old] to save our prestige. If they don't work, they don't eat. And if they do work and they are free, not in purdah, anyone can do mischief with them. Therefore, we marry them young to save them from this mischief and gossip...We will only change [this custom] when our caste says to. We will only raise the age of a girl's marriage in our caste if the girls are put in purdah.

Being in purdah depends on the economic security of the household and on a sufficient level of affluence to be able to do without women's work as a critical source of subsistence. Being married at an age much younger than that of Bhumihaar girls does not, as will be seen below, save the Chamar girls from "mischief."

### Control Over Resources

A key point of contrast between these two groups of women, stemming from their different roles in production, is the extent to which they have control over resources that are critical to the household's survival and income generating. Their dependence upon, or independence of, males is directly correlated with this control. Traditional Hindu law precludes the inheriting of property by daughters (except in the absence of sons) or by

wives. Property is inherited patrilineally by sons; a widow may only use her husband's property until her sons come of age. The cases I am familiar with in which a daughter inherited land or a widow gained control over property inevitably involved a clash and struggle with male kin over claim to the land (M. Sharma 1978:103, 136).

The dowery that goes with a Bhumihar woman in marriage is considered the property of the husband's household and not her own. Women in the landowning caste do have personal clothing, ornaments, and cash that may be given directly to them (usually from their consanguineal relatives). But even personal ornaments, despite the popular myth to the contrary, are not strictly under women's control (cf. Jacobson 1976). Women do have access to grain that may be used to make barter purchases of small items. There is one source of independent income available to only a few of the women from the wealthiest Bhumihar families--moneylending. Using money from their own private fund, these women usually make loans to Chamars and are repaid monthly at the rate of 36% annual interest. This hardly represents any critical contribution to household expenses and, indeed, is used solely by the women they like.<sup>23</sup>

A Chamar woman, on the other hand, makes an absolutely critical contribution to the household subsistence by her work as a daily wage laborer for the Bhumihars (as well as Brahmans and, occasionally, Kurmis). One woman reported receiving a total of about 50 sers as her total payment for working during the harvest season. This represents no inconsiderable amount for the family's survival. The fact that her contribution is so necessary accounts for a Chamar woman's greater independence, voice in decisions, and--ultimately--status within the household. It does not, however, give her higher status in the society at large. This contradiction between the higher status of the Bhumihar in the social sphere and the low status of Chamar women is further brought out by the differences in their control over sexuality.

#### Control of Sexuality, Reproductive Activities, and Fertility

There are two facets to this aspect of a woman's control over her life: control over reproductive activities and fertility within the family and control of sexuality outside. The connection between the early age of marriage for Chamar girls and lack of purdah was mentioned earlier. The purpose is to "save" the girls from the "mischief" they may be vulnerable to as they wander through the village, working for the upper castes. Class dominance is clearly at work in the many incidents in which Bhumihar men take sexual advantage of their low caste female laborers. Men of all castes openly acknowledge this. It was often revealed to illustrate the point that, while higher castes would not physically touch or drink water from Chamars, nor sit on the same cot with them, they do not hesitate to touch their bodies in sexual intimacy. This situation, in which Bhumihars take advantage of the women who come to work for them, had become intolerable for the Chamars at the time of this study. When a group of them drafted a letter to Jagivan Ram, a Chamar who was then Food Minister in the national

government, it became the issue of a major complaint. An illustration of the complexity of the problem is found in the tale of a twenty-two-year old Musahar (Untouchable) who drowned himself by jumping into a village well. This occurred after a heated argument with his wife in which she refused to stop her relationship with two Bhumihars for whom she worked because she received many favors from them in both cash and in kind and these "gifts" were crucial for her family's subsistence. Such poverty-stricken women, because of the complete dependence of their entire families on the landowning caste for their livelihoods, are subject to this injustice and oppression.

While Bhumihar men take advantage of their female laborers, strict chastity is demanded by them of their own women. When asked why they keep their women in purdah, a major reason they give is that "women are not to be trusted." The chastity that is so often lauded as both ideal and reality for Indian womanhood (e.g., Jacobson 1977:44; 1978) must be seen as it is related to class dominance and inequalities.

Bhumihar women do not have much control over their own reproductive activities and fertility. Others who have a more important role are their husbands and mothers-in-law. The latter may even, in the early years of marriage, have an important say as to when a couple may sleep together.<sup>24</sup> The desire of other members of the household for a (male) child, combined with the non-use of contraceptives and the fact that a woman's status is enhanced by bearing children, put pressures on the woman that she is unable to control. Abortion is available only after years of marriage and many children (and miscarriages), when a woman has built up her own network in the village to help her in such matters. I do not have direct information about control over reproductive activities by Chamar women. Given, however, that Chamar women have greater inputs into household decisions in general and given that they are considered more knowledgeable about childbirth and abortifacients than Bhumihar women, we might assume that they would also have more control over reproductive activities.

Despite their great poverty, Chamars seemed less open to even considering the idea of fertility control than Bhumihars. Although it is often assumed that the difference is accounted for by the lack of education among the former, the matter is not that simple. It is well known that the process of development in agricultural economies may cause serious dislocations, specifically among those groups that lose access to control over the means of production (land). Previously, fertility bore a relationship to the numbers that could be supported by what a household produced from the land. With increasing proletarianization and pauperization now occurring, this tie between fertility and the land has been broken. It is, ironically, among the poorest--those who have only their labor to sell--that having many children represents the only form of capital investment and hope for accumulation (Mamdani 1972; Young 1978:130ff; de Janvry and Garramon 1977:212ff). Thus, as Beneria and Sen note, "pronatalist tendencies may have a clear economic basis based on the poor peasant household's condition of survival" (1981:296). Yet the fact remains that it is the women who bear the children.

While it is true that decisions about childbearing may affect the survival of the entire household over time, the most immediate burden of multiple pregnancies is on the mother. In conditions of severe poverty and malnutrition as well as overwork, this can and does take a heavy toll on the mother's health and well-being. The poor peasant household may survive off the continuous pregnancy and ill-health of the mother, which are exacerbated by high infant mortality. The mother's class interests and her responsibilities as a woman come into severe conflict (Beneria and Sen 1981:296; my emphasis).

### Stereotypic Ideals of Indian Woman

The "ideal" Indian woman, maintained by the Bhumihsars, is worshipped as a goddess; chaste, submissive, self-sacrificing, dependent, and restricted to domestic affairs. Although not all Bhumihsar women (in fact, none that I knew) lived up to this ideal, it remained the ideal. Chamar women, on the other hand, not only did not conform to this ideal, they were not even expected to. They had a greater understanding of the way in which the realities of their existence made the women the way they were. Chamar women were hardly conceived of as goddesses and chastity was not always theirs to control. They were not submissive and in purdah, but would speak up and protest. They were not only dominant in domestic duties, but also worked outside the home and had a comparatively greater economic independence and freedom of movement.

### Contradictions of Class and Gender in Rural North India

An attempt to understand the position of women in rural North India necessitated identifying the various social relations that structure women's subordination to men (gender) and determining how these are distinct from or connected with the social relations maintaining class dominance and subordination. This may show us how class location mediates and differentiates the experience of gender oppression. Rich and poor women experience oppression under capitalism in different ways and are placed in subordinate positions at different levels in the interaction of class and gender. The manner in which both of these determine the relationship of men and women to the production process is, however, not always the same. On the one hand, Boserup and others argue that "increased production of cash/export crops demanded by the colonial powers from an indigenous economy progressively excluded women from export production and confined them to the subsistence sector" (Stoler 1977:70). Stoler, in her study on class structure and female autonomy in rural Java, on the other hand, sees access to strategic resources, cross-cutting sexual distinctions, as being more important (1977). Omvedt also argues that "the greatest barriers to the full liberation of Indian women today lie not so much in the survivals of caste orthodoxy or patriarchalism as in the continuing socio-economic inequalities that make it impossible for lower-class women to capitalize on the democratizing gains of the nationalist period" (1975:43).

It is true that the sexual division of labor in "traditional" societies has been changing and that the increasing stratification and differentiation that comes with capitalist relations makes socio-economic status as important a variable as sex in determining the division of labor. Women's extra-domestic occupations in rural North India are thus correlated with the position of the household within the community. Nonetheless, as Young also found in her study in Oaxaca, Mexico, "women have not escaped from the sex hierarchy, rather this has been replicated in the developing capitalist relations...[it] is not merely a case of the perpetuation of the ideological system, but rather of women in this part of the world being more firmly locked into domestic and reproductive roles as a consequence of the type of economic changes that have been fostered" (1976:153, my emphasis). In other words, the ideology of patriarchy is constantly being incorporated into the material base of capitalist relations.

The ideology of patriarchal gender relations has been reinforced by the type of development taking place in the Indian countryside.<sup>25</sup> This adversely affects women in a number of ways. First, "capitalist penetration leads to the pauperization and marginalization of large masses of subsistence reproducers in India, the capitalist periphery. . .women are more affected by these processes than men, who may still be partly absorbed into the actual wage labor force" [i.e., proletarianized] (Mies 1980:9). Women are increasingly losing effective control over productive resources and over the labor process and production. This has eroded the material base of women's subsistence reproduction and adversely affected their status. Because they are both squeezed out of agriculture and are not being employed elsewhere, women are becoming pauperized at a faster pace than men.<sup>26</sup>

Second, there is a growing inequality and polarization between the sexes as women are confined to reproductive roles (as housewives in purdah) or participate in the less productive spheres of traditional agriculture. Men monopolize those spheres involving new technology and increase their control over production; they also are recruited as laborers when production for exchange is introduced. New elements of patriarchalism and sexism emerge.

Third, and most important for this paper, the polarization of the sexes is linked to the overall process of class polarization taking place under the impact of capitalist farming and "Green Revolution" technologies. The class differentiation accompanying capitalist transformation provides a new basis for differentiating women by class. Once some of the lower castes ("backward classes"), for example, are able to achieve a certain economic status, their women go into seclusion and become subject to patriarchal norms of behavior (e.g., the aspirations of Arunpur Chamars). Poor classes have adopted the patriarchal dowry system in imitation of those with higher status. The result is indebtedness among those who cannot even always meet subsistence needs (Mies 1980:9-10).

The situation in Arunpur starkly concretizes several of these general observations. The major contradiction in gender relations for rural women

is that increased economic independence and security for males secures only increased dependence and restriction in the lives of women. By relinquishing their role in production, women then relinquish control over the only possible source of income that may generate capital accumulation. With the loss of this role, women's status is devalued. This is most apparent in the contrast between the private, enhanced domestic status of the Chamar women and the public, enhanced social status of the Bhumihars. The latter come from households belonging to a class of landowners. The economic independence and security of these households, which can afford the use of hired labor, has relieved women of many of the agricultural tasks and some of the domestic chores. They are confined to reproduction tasks in the household, restricted by seclusion and the practice of purdah, totally dependent upon males in the family, subject to control by a host of others, and have no material bases from which to direct family affairs and be important decision makers. There has been a "trade-off" between low gender status in the family and higher social class status in the community.

Chamar women, as landless agricultural laborers, contribute to the income needed for the survival of the family. They exhibit a greater economic independence and freedom as well as a higher status within their own households. They are also controlled by Chamar men and materially dependent, but this appears to be a different type of dependency from that experienced by upper caste women. It has less to do with the sexual division of labor or the reduction of women to female tasks in household and child care. The material dependence of Untouchable women may be, rather, a function of their: (a) total reliance on the labor of others (as when a young bride or mother does not work); (b) the nature of decisions over which they have no control (e.g., biological reproduction); or (c) the vulnerability arising from the chance that essential income may be withdrawn from the relationship (e.g., a woman may lose her income from agricultural work). Unlike the dependence of upper caste women, which is rooted in the sexual division of labor and hence predominantly a form of economic dependence, the dependency binding Chamar women to men appears to be based more on extra-economic forms of control and dominance that are rooted in superior power (see further, Middleton 1981: 121-122).

The claim that Chamar women would prefer to go into purdah does not contradict the view that by so doing women increase their subordination to men within the family. It reveals the contradictory position of women in rural India under increasing class polarities generated by the high level of productive forces and the spread of capitalist relations in agriculture. While "development" and modern changes in technology have freed the more affluent women from the necessity of engaging in strenuous agricultural work, they have also freed women from a participation in and control over subsistence production. This "freedom" has increased their own dependency and subordination within the household. By devaluing women's work and independence in production and imputing a higher status to those who are the most dependent and confined to reproduction activities, patriarchal ideology and relations within the household have reinforced the material subordination of rural women of all classes. The price of poverty is too high to pay for such "freedoms."

Multiple contradictions also face women with regard to biological reproduction in Arunpur. On the one hand, increasing uneven development via the extension of capitalist relations of production has created a poverty-stricken class which depends on a large number of laborers to assure minimal survival of the household. Such short-term gains from large families, in the face of household vulnerability, create tremendous obstacles to overcoming the very conditions of poverty which caused this in the first place. On the other hand, the reproduction needed to ensure survival of the laboring class family in the countryside is not conducive to ensuring the survival of a woman from that class. Thus, Chamar women, like Bhumihaar women, have very different views toward birth control, contraception, and even sterilization than their husbands or mothers-in-law (see also Beneria and Sen 1981:296; de Janvry and Garramon 1977:212ff).

The contradictions arising out of capitalist development as it affects relations of class and gender may be best seen from the position of the poor rural woman. She is subject to increasing poverty and the onerous burden of a double day--domestic chores at home and labor in agricultural production as well. She faces a triple exploitation. First, as a woman she is oppressed by her husband and sexually abused by landlords and rich peasants. Second, as a member of a landless agrarian class, she is exploited by the upper class (and castes) in the countryside and by the landlords and moneylenders. Third, as a member of a more generalized class of laborers within capitalist society, she and all the other rural and industrial workers, are exploited by the rich landlords and moneylenders as well as by the capitalist class. An understanding of the nature of women's oppression and the importance of class differences in defining their subordination makes it harder to refer to "false consciousness" as an explanation for why the poor would like to go into purdah or so strongly defend an institution--the family--that appears to be the locus of much of their oppression. We need to realize that the material realities of "trade-offs" for rural women will differ. Neither may "false consciousness" be used to dismiss divisions among women that are rooted in class. The attack on women's subordination, as Sen perceptively notes, must be balanced with a vision of the real and possible alternatives that exist for them (1980:85; also Tepperman 1981:10).

NOTES

My first contact with the perspective presented here was at a graduate seminar on class and gender in the Third World conducted by Dr. Gita Sen (Economics Department, Graduate Center of the New School for Social Research, N.Y., Spring 1980). My debt to her is inestimable. I am also grateful to Dr. Rayna Rapp for extending the similar courtesy of allowing me to participate in her seminar on the anthropology of women. The writings of Beneria and Sen (1981), Boserup (1970), Humphries (1977), Middleton (1981a, b), Omvedt (1975, 1978), Scott and Tilly (1975), Sen (1980), Tepperman (1981), and Young (1978) are among the many seminal to my own research. Fieldwork in India was carried out with the aid of Fulbright, NDEA, and NSF predoctoral research grants. Mahalo also to Emma Porio for helpful comments.

1. Paper presented at a Conference on "Concepts and Strategies: Women's Studies in Different Cultural Contexts." Sponsored by the Women's Studies Program, University of Hawaii and the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, November 15-17, 1982.
2. The first agricultural research effort was directed toward Mexico. In 1962 the Rockefeller Foundation joined with the Ford Foundation to set up the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines to develop new rice varieties comparable to the wheats in Mexico (Cleaver 1972:224-225).
3. For example, the study of the International Labour Office on Working Women in India (1963) deals primarily with women in paid employment (pg. 3). It accounts for the lack of this type of unemployment among rural women because they are "still within the bounds of social taboos and traditional habits of mind" (pg. 5).
4. There is a large literature on the "mode of production debate" regarding India. See the bibliographies in Byres 1972, 1981; also discussion in Omvedt 1975.
5. IADP model districts; Shahabad, Raipur, Aligarh, Cachar, Thanjavur, West Godavari, Ludhiana, Pali-Sirohi, Alleppey-Palghat, Chandara, Burdwan, Mandya, Sambalpur, Surat-Bulsar, Jammu-Anantnag.
6. The village is given a pseudonym. Research was conducted there in 1968-1969, with a brief revisit in 1976. It is supplemented by research in a western Uttar Pradesh village during six months in 1976 and again, briefly, in 1979.
7. This section draws primarily on the work of Beneria and Sen (1981), Engels (1977), Humphries (1977), Marx (1967), Mies (1980), Sen (1980), Tepperman (1981), and Young (1978).

8. This is also quoted in Humphries (1977), Sacks (1975), and Tepperman (1981) and discussed in Beneria and Sen (1981).
9. The following tables (Tables 1 through 6) are drawn from Mies (1980), Omvedt (1978), Government of India (1974), and Jacobson (1976-77).
10. Table 10 on Work Participation of Women by State is drawn from the Government of India (1974:156).
11. Although these numbers represent figures from 1968-1969, I will keep them in the present tense for reading ease.
12. Those who had been the occupancy-tenants of the zamindar actually became sirdars who paid the state a tax which was equivalent to the rent previously charged by the landlord. These sirdars were not allowed to sell their land until they became bhumidars (i.e., outright owners) by paying ten times the annual revenue to the government.
13. This is not the case in the western part of Uttar Pradesh where even Brahmans will do their own ploughing.
14. An unexplored form of socially accepted "resistance" by young brides is the high incidence of their being possessed.
15. When a woman returns to her natal village, where she is a "daughter" to all, she has none of the restrictions of seclusion and purdah (until someone comes to fetch her from her in-laws). See further, Jacobson 1975.
16. Marriage expenses, doweries, and demands have all sky-rocketed in wealthy village weddings. Today, 20,000-30,000 rs. in cash alone is not unusual. Bicycles have been replaced by motorcycles; even fans, refrigerators, and T.V.s may be part of the dowery for a village girl who will live in a town.
17. Several years usually pass by between the formal marriage ceremony of a Bhumihar girl (usually right after puberty) and her gauna, or second marriage ceremony which involves actually going to live in the husband's home.
18. A small brass pot with myriad uses.
19. Coming from this society, I am embarrassed to make any such judgment regarding the extent of women's work: Bhumihar women certainly work very hard, but Chamars work harder.
20. Cooking the sugarcane juice--in addition to ploughing--is in the sole purview of men. I have never seen a woman cooking the sugar cane juice into gur (molasses). They will feed the sugarcane into the crushers, walk behind the bullocks or buffalo turning the crusher, and feed the fires cooking the juice.

21. No Bhumihar man or woman ever admitted to major agricultural tasks being done outside the house by women.
22. Women and children who work daily received half a rupee (6.6¢) plus breakfast and lunch for a day's work. Men who worked on a daily basis earned anywhere from one to two rupees per day or one and a half seers (three pounds) of grain plus breakfast.
23. Jacobson makes reference to Scarlett Epstein's research in a Karnataka village in South India where women became moneylenders, a role traditionally played by men. "Social tensions created by women's involvement in this new arena of economic activity led to witchcraft accusations against them" (1976-1977:226).
24. The Bhumihars have a separate house (ghar) where the women and children stay and another structure (baithak) where men sleep, animals are tethered, and male visitors stay. A man will "visit" his wife at night for the purpose of sexual relations and then return to the baithak to sleep.
25. It is commonly believed that the maintenance of caste distinctions is contradictory to the development of a class society. Scholars have not adequately explained, therefore, the observed increasing rise of "casteism" that has taken hold of the countryside and has figured prominently in much violence and atrocities. If we understand the manner in which capitalist relations build upon preexisting inequalities, then there is no reason to suppose that caste will "disappear" with the advent of classes (see further, M. Sharma 1978:232ff).
26. An example of marginalization is Mies' study of women in the export-oriented crochet lace industry in the villages of West Godavari District, in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. This is a putting-out industry that is compatible with seclusion and domestic work. Women make lace for 6-8 hours a day, in addition to their household chores; their average daily earnings are less than a third of the official minimum wage for female agricultural workers (Mies 1980:8-9).

Table 1. Sex Ratio in States, 1921-71 (Females per 1000 Males)

State	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
Andhra	993	987	980	986	981	977
Assam	908	886	886	877	876	901
Bihar	1016	994	996	990	994	956
Gujrat	944	945	941	952	940	936
Jammu & Kashmir	870	865	869	873	878	882
Kerala	1011	1022	1027	1028	1022	1019
Madhya Pradesh	974	973	970	967	953	943
Maharashtra	950	947	949	941	936	932
Mysore	969	965	960	966	959	959
Orissa	1086	1067	1053	1022	1001	989
Punjab	821	830	850	858	864	874
Rajasthan	896	907	906	921	908	919
Tamilnadu	1029	1027	1012	1007	992	979
Uttar Pradesh	909	904	907	910	909	883
West Bengal	905	890	852	865	878	892
All India	955	955	--	947	941	930

SOURCE: "Critical Issues on the Status of Women, Employment, Health, Education Priorities for Action," by Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, Advisory Committee on Women's Studies. New Delhi 1977.

FROM: Mies 1980:5

Table 2. Females per Thousand Males of Total Population, All India  
Workers in Each Industrial Category and Non-Workers 1901-71.

Year	In Popula- tion	Total Work- ers (I-IX)	Primary Sector			Secondary Sector					Tertiary Sector			Non- Workers X		
			I	II	I-II	III	I+ II+ III	IV	V	VI	IV+ V+ VI	VII	VIII		IX	VII+ VIII+ IX
1901	972	504	431	1051	540	335(639)*	534	---	553	400	543	405	65	325	350	1707
1911	964	525	427	1054	567	337(500)	560	---	574	336	548	513	62	371	390	1676
1921	955	516	463	952	557	372(562)	545	---	508	412	501	479	65	357	379	1629
1931	955	453	289	1006	476	337(396)	466	---	440	303	423	396	41	484	410	1656
1951	947	408	357	857	469	491(434)	470	---	288	248	291	187	61	332	257	1580
1961	941	460	498	819	565	297---	552	663	110	134	348	119	22	287	210	1581
1971	930	210	135	498	249	210(155)	248	265	88	101	142	59	34	165	108	1726

The industrial categories are: I. Cultivators; II. Agricultural Laborers; III. Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting & Plantation Orchards and allied activities; IV. Mining and Quarrying; V. Manufacturing processes, (a) Household Industry, (b) Other than Household Industry; VI. Construction; VII. Trade and Commerce; VIII. Transport Storages and Communications; IX. Other Services; X. Non-Workers.

\*The parenthetical figures are for "Mining and Quarrying."

SOURCE: "Critical Issues on the Status of Women, Employment, Health, Education Priorities for Action," by Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, Advisory Committee on Women's Studies. New Delhi 1977.

FROM: Mies 1980:6.

Table 3. Important Manufacturing Activities in Which the Ratio of Female-to-Male Workers has Shown Long-Term Decline 1911-1961

Manufacturing Activities	Female Workers per 1000 Male Workers				
	<u>1911</u>	<u>1921</u>	<u>1931</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1961</u>
Processing of Foodgrains	12,075	7,779	7,065	1,520	331
Bread and other bakery products	1,644	1,466	1,662	447	64
Production of vegetable oils	688	656	595	347	458
Nets, ropes, cordage, etc.	1,962	1,295			1,236
Footwear and their repair	232	201	141	88	81
Earthenware and pottery making	572	540	490	402	507

SOURCE: J.P. Ambannavar, Demography India 4(2), December 1975, p. 353.

FROM: Mies 1980:5.

Table 4. Trend in Distribution of Women Workers 1911-1971 (In thousand)

Year	Agriculture	Industry	Service	Total	Female workers as % to total female population	Female workers as % to total population
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1911	30,898 (73.9)	6,137 (14.7)	4,767 (11.4)	41,802 (100)	33.73	34.44
1921	30,279 (75.5)	5,409 (13.5)	4,407 (11.0)	40,095 (100)	33.73	34.02
1931	27,177 (72.3)	5,147 (13.7)	5,276 (14.0)	37,600 (100)	27.63	31.17
1951*	31,062 (76.8)	4,554 (11.2)	4,923 (12.1)	40,539 (100)	23.30	28.98
1961	47,274 (79.6)	6,884 (11.6)	5,244 (8.8)	59,402 (100)	27.96	31.53
1971	25,060 (80.1)	3,307 (10.5)	2,931 (9.4)	31,298 (100)	11.86	17.35

1941 Figures are omitted as they are based on 2% of the population on sample basis.

Note: Figures within brackets denote percentages of women workers.

\*Figures do not include Jammu and Kashmir.

SOURCE: (1) Census of India 1961--Paper No. 1 of 1962--Final population.  
(2) Pocket Book of Population Statistics--Census Centenary 1972 totals.

FROM: Government of India 1974:153.

Table 5. Distribution of Women Workers in Agriculture 1951-1971

Category	1951 No. of female workers	%age of total no. of female workers	1961 No. of female workers	%age of total no. of female workers	1971 No. of female workers	%age of total no. of female workers
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cultivators	18367875	45.42	33103198	55.73	9266471	29.61
Agricultural labourers	12693671	<u>31.39</u>	14170831	<u>23.86</u>	15794399	<u>50.46</u>
		76.81		89.59		80.07

Excluding the figures for 1961 as a deviation case, which may be attributed to the broader definition of cultivators adopted in that census, the decline of women cultivators from 183.6 lakhs in 1951 to 92.6 lakhs in 1971, i.e., by nearly 50%, can be attributed to increasing pauperization leading to loss of land or inadequate growth of productive employment opportunities on family farms, leading to withdrawal of women from active cultivation.

FROM: Government of India 1974:163.

Table 6. Employment in 1961 and 1971 Using Adjusted Census Figures (in 000's)

	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>	
	1961	1971	1961	1971
Cultivators	66,465	70,005	33,156	15,976
Agricultural Labourers	17,324	32,535	14,198	20,272
Other Workers	45,382	49,876	12,151	8,343
Total Workers	129,171	152,406	59,505	44,591
Non-workers	96,975	131,531	153,286	219,412
Total Population	226,146	283,937	212,791	264,013

FROM: Omvedt 1978:379

Table 7: Population of Arunpur by Caste<sup>a</sup>

	<u>Main Pura</u>		<u>Little Pura</u>		<u>Chamar Pura</u>		<u>Noniya Pura</u>		<u>Kurmi Pura</u>		<u>TOTALS</u>			
	P <sup>b</sup>	H <sup>c</sup>	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	H	P	% of Total Population	Average	
													H	Household Size
Brahman	48	10									48	4.6	10	4.8
Bhumihar	218	19	64	6							282	27.0	25	11.2
Kurmi	87	10	35	6					74	9	196	18.7	25	7.8
Kahar	12	2							25	3	37	3.5	5	7.4
Lohar	33	5									33	3.2	5	6.6
Kevat							3	1			3	.03	1	4.0 <sup>d</sup>
Parihar	13	3									13	1.2	3	4.3
Nai	17	3									17	1.6	3	5.6
Kohar							24	3			24	2.3	3	8.0
Kalwar	29	2									29	2.8	2	14.5
Noniya							20	3			20	2.0	3	6.6
Teli	48	6									48	4.6	6	8.0
Pasi							1				1	.01	d	---
Chamar			255	44							255	24.3	44	5.8
Musahar							29	4			29	2.8	4	7.3
Dharkar							12	2			12	1.0	2	6.0
Subtotals	505	60	99	12	255	44	89	13	99	12	1047	99.64	141	7.4

<sup>a</sup>This does not include the ex-zamindar's household or several other houses along the main road which are not part of the community.

<sup>b</sup>Population.

<sup>c</sup>Households.

<sup>d</sup>The single Kevat in Arunpur lives with a Pasi woman. They have two children.

Table 8. Land Ownership in Arunpur by Caste (in Bighas)<sup>a</sup>

Caste	Settlement					Totals		
	Main Pura	Little Pura	Chamar Pura	Noniya Pura	Kurmi Pura	Land Owned	Percent of Total Land Owned	Per Capita Ownership
Brahman	28 <sup>b</sup>					28	6	.60
Bhumihar	210	106				316	63	1.10
Kurmi	51	26			31	108	21	.55
Kahar	3				9	12	2	.30 <sup>c</sup>
Lohar	2					2	.5	.06
Kevat				0		0	0	0
Parihar	0					0	0	0
Nai	10					10	2	.58
Kohar				5		5	1	.20
Kalwar	0					0	0	0
Noniya				2		2	.5	.10
Teli	15					15	3	.30
Pasi				0		0	0	0
Chamar			6			6	1	.02
Musahar				0		0	0	0
Dharkar				0		0	0	0
Subtotals	319	132	6	7	40	504 <sup>d</sup>	100	0.48

<sup>a</sup>1 bigha = 0.67 acre.

<sup>b</sup>Figures incomplete for two households.

<sup>c</sup>The amount of land the Kahars own is not exact because of their involvement in a dispute with the village over a pond.

<sup>d</sup>The total area is larger than the amount included in the village boundaries (i.e., 291 acres or 434 bighas), since some villagers owned land outside Arunpur.

FROM: Sharma 1978:35

Table 9. Caste and Land Ownership in Arunpur by Amount Owned

	<u>Landless</u>	<u>Up to and including 5 bighas</u>	<u>6-10</u>	<u>11+</u>	<u>% Pop.</u>	<u>% Land Owned</u>
Brahman		48 <sup>a</sup> (10) <sup>b</sup>			4.6%	6%
Bhumihar		75 (11)**	59 (5)	148 (9)	27%	63%
Kurmi	19 (3)	89 (16)	62 (5)	26 (1)	18.7%	21%
Chamar*	237 (42)	59 (8)**			28.1%	1%
Other	94 (14)	126 (16)	5 (1)		22.6%	9%
% of Pop.	33%	38%	12%	17%		
% of Land Owned	0%	31%	18%	51%		

\*Includes other Untouchables.

\*\*Bhumihars all 5 bighas or more; Chamars all own less than 5.

<sup>a</sup>Population

<sup>b</sup>Households

FROM: Sharma 1978:42-43

Table 10. Statewise Percentage of Female Workers to Their Total Population in 1961 and 1971 in Rural and Urban Areas

Sl No.	State/Territory	Rural				Urban			
		1961		1971		1961		1971	
		%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Andhra Pradesh	64.32	1	31.69	2	52.40	10	11.60	4
2.	Assam	53.98	17	6.36	18	55.36	5	4.32	20
3.	Bihar	56.00	14	11.04	14	51.74	12	6.45	15
4.	Gujarat	55.30	15	13.58	12	48.37	19	6.32	16
5.	Himachal Pradesh	63.47	3	22.58	6	56.44	3	7.61	13
6.	Jammu & Kashmir	59.28	10	5.94	19	50.78	15	3.60	22
7.	Kerala	47.42	23	14.92	11	45.98	21	11.20	5
8.	Madhya Pradesh	61.58	5	23.73	5	52.44	9	8.09	11
9.	Maharashtra	58.07	12	28.70	3	54.83	6	9.72	9
10.	Mysore	60.40	8	17.60	9	51.57	13	10.08	8
11.	Nagaland	61.04	6	50.22	1	52.13	11	9.08	10
12.	Orissa	61.02	7	8.55	16	57.22	2	10.73	6
13.	Punjab	53.44	19	1.27	23	50.93	14	3.03	22
14.	Rajasthan	60.13	9	11.95	13	48.04	20	10.45	7
15.	Tamil Nadu	62.19	4	21.19	7	53.16	7	16.40	2
16.	Uttar Pradesh	59.20	11	9.54	15	51.74	12	4.16	21
17.	West Bengal	53.46	18	5.64	20	55.38	4	4.75	19
18.	Andaman & Nicobar	64.27	2	8.01	17	66.17	1	7.25	14
19.	Delhi	47.82	22	5.37	22	52.80	8	5.18	18
20.	Goa, Daman & Diu	71.77	20	29.78	48	48.75	26	13.04	3
21.	Manipur	47.93	21	27.33	4	40.99	22	18.00	1
22.	Pondicherry	57.13	13	15.61	10	48.74	17	7.80	12
23.	Tripura	55.24	16	52.39	21	46.84	18	5.42	17

Note - Figures for 1971 are corrected by including "non-workers" with secondary activity.

SOURCE: Report of the Committee on Unemployment, 1973 Appendix IX.

FROM: Government of India 1974:156

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